Land for Service c.1790s

The American Revolution

New York State played a crucial role during the American Revolution. Several Important military campaigns took place in New York State, including the campaign that ended in the Battle of Saratoga, the turning point of the Revolution. New York faced major challenges during the war and struggled to pay the troops enlisted under its banner. Its currency, when available, was quickly inflated. Incentives were needed to encourage soldiers to enlist. Early in the conflict, before New York became a state, the Provincial Congress offered each soldier a land bounty of 100 acres, to be granted at the end of the war. Lagging enlistments caused New York to increase this bounty to 600 acres in 1781. Officers were given larger plots of land, according to rank.



Lands for these incentives came from sparsely settled parts of central and western New York.



Individual plots were numbered and labeled with their grantees.



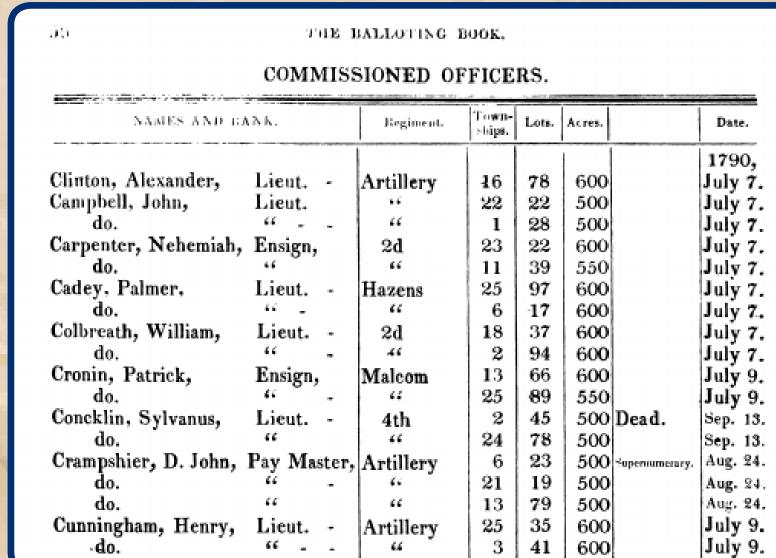
Map of the surveyed lands around Cayuga Lake, divided into lots with acreage, 1795.

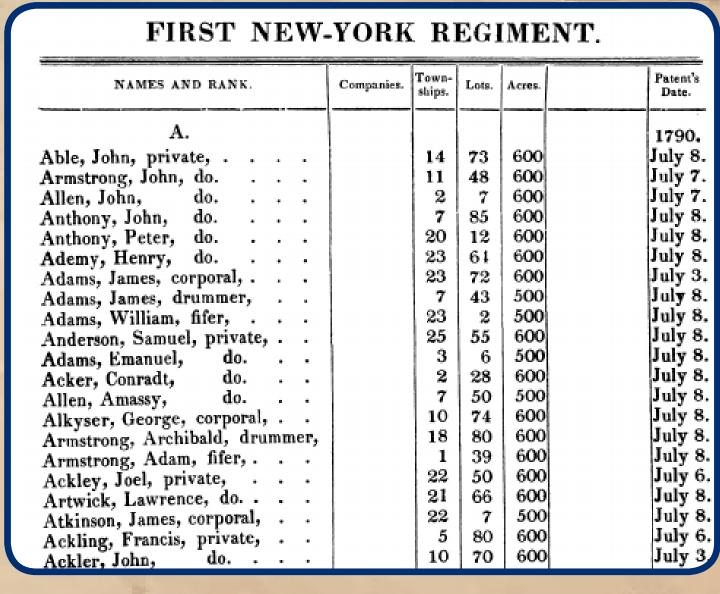
The Military Tract

New York State set aside 2 million acres in the Central New York Military Tract or as it was sometimes called "The New Military Tract." Twenty-eight Military Tract townships were established. Each township comprised 100 tracts of 600 acres each. Townships were given names selected from classical Greek or Roman history, such as Homer, Cato and Pompey, or famous English authors such as Locke and Milton. Robert Harpur, a clerk in the Office of New York State's Surveyor General is credited with selecting the names.

The tract includes what are now the counties of Cayuga, Cortland, Onondaga, and Seneca, along with parts of Oswego, Tompkins, Schuyler, and Wayne counties.







The surveyed plots of land were numbered 1-100 in each of the 28 townships as part of the Military Tract. These plots were given temporary land patents and listed on a "ballot" that was randomly paired with soldiers names. This process and the record of ballots and their corresponding soldiers are recorded in "The Balloting Book and other Documents Relating to Military Bounty Lands in the State of New York."